



Michigan Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Division

2005 Ruffed Grouse and American Woodcock Hunter Cooperator Survey Preliminary Results*

Ruffed grouse and American woodcock cooperator surveys rely on volunteer hunters that record numbers of hours hunted and ruffed grouse and woodcock flushed each day of hunting. Data obtained from cooperating hunters are summarized by hunt zone and by two-week intervals as the average number of grouse or woodcock flushed per hour of hunting. Flush rates reported by cooperators provide an indicator of harvest. Grouse and woodcock cooperator surveys are just one of several surveys used by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to monitor ruffed grouse and woodcock populations. Results of this survey will be combined with hunter harvest data and information gathered during spring breeding surveys to forecast grouse and woodcock hunting prospects for the 2006 season.

Cooperator Participation

Hunter records were available from 265 cooperators who hunted in 2005. These hunters spent 6,424 hours afield. In 2004, we received reports from 251 cooperators that spent 5,859 hours afield.

Ruffed Grouse Flush Rates

The number of ruffed grouse flushed per hour by cooperators in 2005 (1.52) increased 28.8% statewide, compared to flush rates from 2004 (1.18). Ruffed grouse flush rates were highest in zone 2 (Northern Lower Peninsula), followed by zones 1 (Upper Peninsula), and 3 (Southern Lower Peninsula), respectively (Figures 1 and 2). The highest average flush rates reported by cooperators were during October 16-31 in zone 1. The highest average flush rates in zone 2 were during November 1-14 (Table 1).

American Woodcock Flush Rates

The number of American woodcock flushed per hour by cooperators in 2005 (1.36) decreased 1% statewide compared to flush rates from 2004 (1.38). American woodcock flush rates were highest in zone 2, followed by zones 1 and 3, respectively (Figure 3 and 4). Average flush rates peaked during October 1-15 in all zones (Table 1).

Acknowledgments

We thank all the cooperators who maintained and provided grouse and woodcock hunting records. Lou Ann Shaw entered cooperator data.

Table 1. Average ruffed grouse and American woodcock flushes per hour^a, by two-week intervals, as reported by cooperating hunters in 2005.

Species and dates	Zone ^b		
	1	2	3
Ruffed grouse			
September 15 - 30	1.00	1.99	0.92
October 1 - 15	1.43	1.49	1.02
October 16 - 31	1.20	1.85	0.81
November 1 - 14	1.48	1.60	0.68
December 1 - 15		1.74	0.96
December 16 - January 1		1.98	0.86
American woodcock			
September 15 - 30	0.88	1.66	1.06
October 1 - 15	1.65	2.01	1.55
October 16 - 31	1.09	1.48	1.44
November 1 - 14	0.21	0.67	1.13
December 1 - 15		0.00	0.00
December 16 - January 1		0.00	0.00

^aDoes not include hunting data when effort was <20 hours.

^bSee Appendix A for boundaries of zones.

*The results will be final when the annual status report is published.

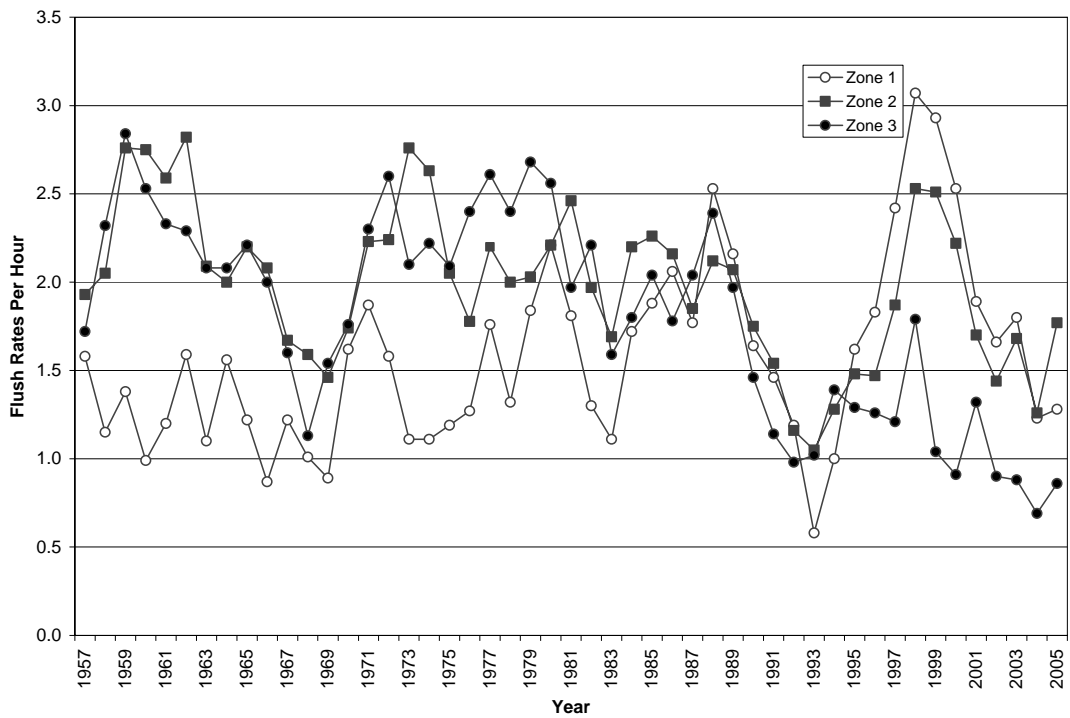


Figure 1. Ruffed grouse flush rates reported by cooperating hunters, 1957-2005.

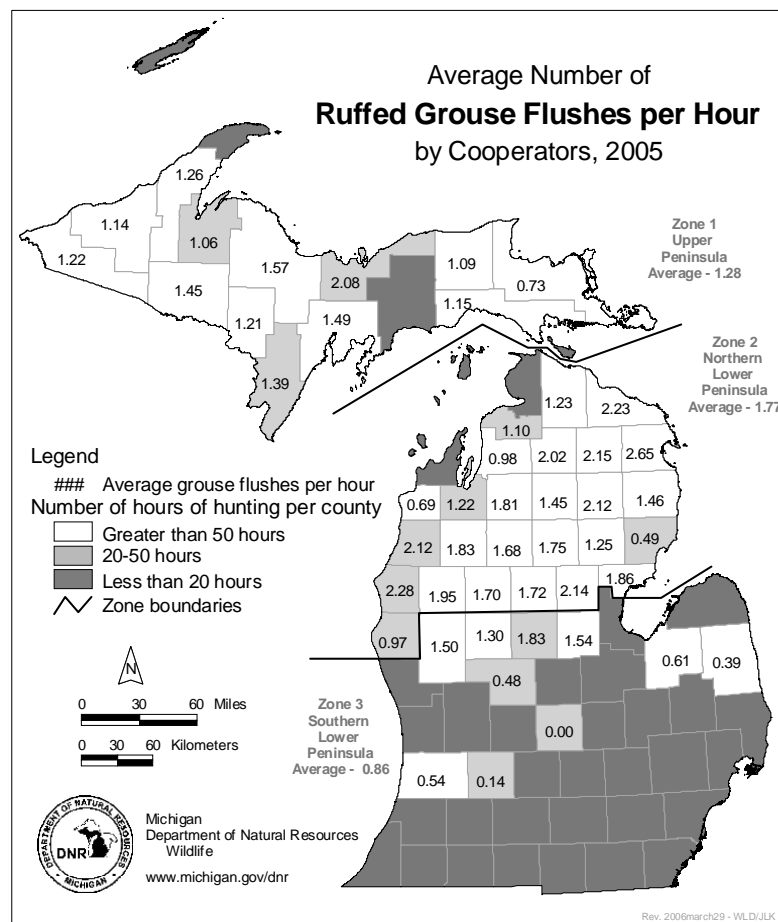


Figure 2. Average number of ruffed grouse flushed per hour by cooperators in 2005.

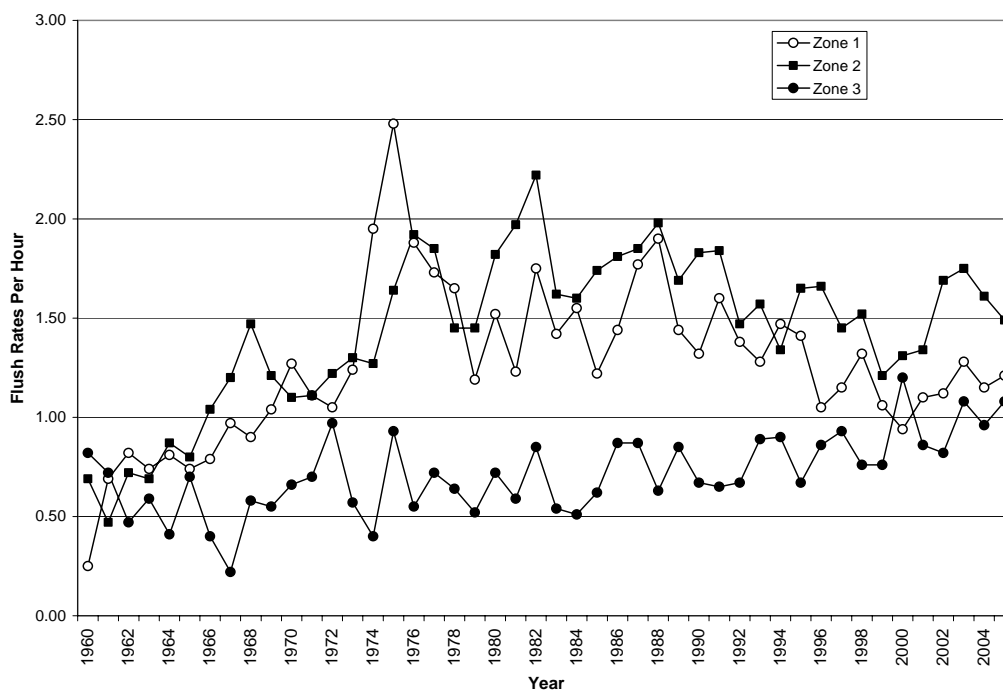


Figure 3. American woodcock flush rates reported by cooperating hunters, 1960-2005.

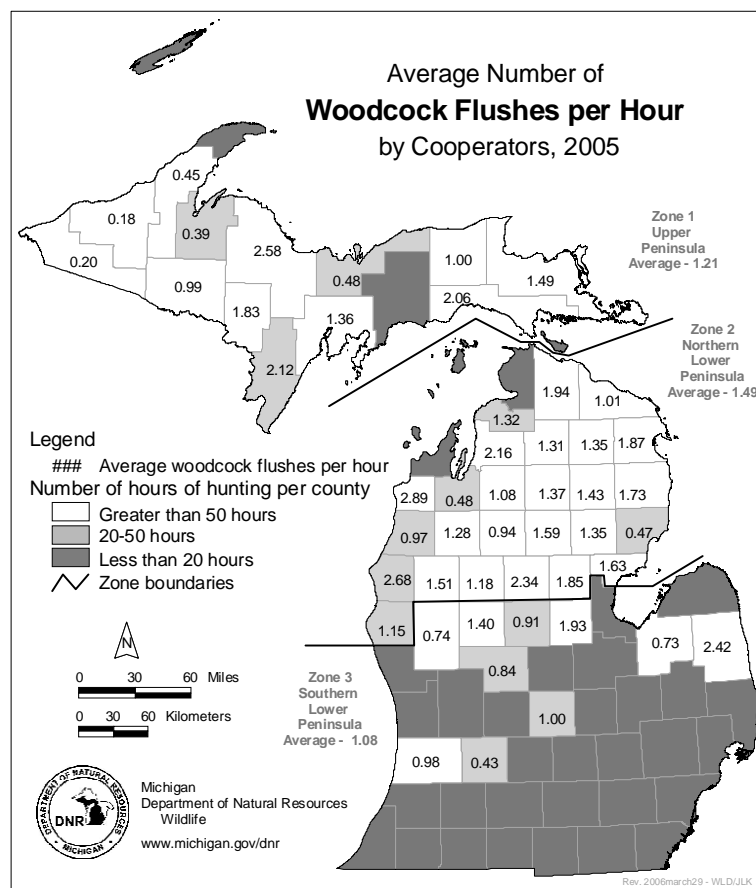


Figure 4. Average number of American woodcock flushed per hour by cooperators in 2005.